[**30 songs that capture the spirit of travel**](http://www.bravenewtraveler.com/2008/05/02/30-songs-that-capture-the-spirit-of-travel/)



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**There’s a good reason** many of us take an mp3 player with us when we travel. Music can transport us-back home, away from an overcrowded bus, or through a restless night.

Music helps us connect to others-to fellow travelers who might share our taste in songs and to locals who might not speak our language but can carry the rhythm.

For those of us with gypsy blood, music can speak to who we are and why it is that we can never seem to settle down. Music engenders a desire to see a new place, or to travel simply for the [joy of the journey](http://www.bravenewtraveler.com/2008/03/17/8-reasons-we-love-music-on-the-journey/).

In the few minutes that a song lasts, the ember of wanderlust inside us can be stoked into a bonfire that can’t be ignored. Suddenly, we’re inspired to earn that money, book that flight, [pack that bag](http://www.bravenewtraveler.com/2007/01/31/7-reasons-to-travel-with-one-bag/)–do whatever it takes to get back on the road.

So here I present thirty songs that best capture the spirit of travel.

Go ahead and load up your mp3 player, slip on your earphones, and crank up the tunes. Who knows where these songs will take you.

**Songs about place**

Certain songs take you immediately to a specific place. They precisely capture somewhere you’ve been or inspire you to plan a trip to the locale forever locked in lyrics.

Other songs don’t name names, but in your mind, the place evoked by the tune is so exact you have no doubt what town, city, or country the singer is crooning about…until you meet another traveler who pictures an entirely different place every time that song is played.

**1.** [***Carolina in my mind***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNjLUPqckWY) **by James Taylor**

Who doesn’t see that Carolina sunshine or feel that moonshine when this classic comes through the speakers? I certainly hear “the highway calling” each time this song appears on my play list.

**2.** [***Marrakesh Express***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtzIwGViR5w) **by Crosby, Stills, and Nash**

The vivid imagery of this song–colored cottons, charming cobras–brings this famed Moroccan city right to life. Can you resist its call?

**3.** [***Africa***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPT_3PEjnsE) **by Toto**

Come on, I couldn’t leave this one off, could I? It’s classic.

**4.** [***Katmandu***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8420UW2_veM) **by Cat Stevens**

Strange and bewildering is certainly one way to describe this town. If you’ve been there, I’m sure you can think of many other fitting adjectives.

**5.** [***Graceland***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtT7Og2LBbE) **by Paul Simon**

On the surface, sure, it’s a song about Memphis, but I think we all have our own Graceland, that place where we go for reasons we can’t explain, with the hope of being well received.

**6.** [***We danced anyway***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XW96Z2b2HsY) **by Deana Carter**

In each of our histories, there’s that “happy little foreign town,” where we danced, laughed, and were in love with every minute of every day. It’s the place we find a way to go back to time and again, even if just in our memories.

**7.** [***Where the streets have no name***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gq08ouOwiqQ) **by U2**

It’s the town not in any guidebook, the one you found when you got off the train at the wrong stop or surreptitiously shared a hostel room with someone who had just come from there. It’s the restaurant without a sign, the guestroom tucked away in a back alley, the beach you’ll never be able to find again…but will always remember.

**Songs about how to travel**

A common maxim reminds us that it’s not the destination, but the journey that matters. If it’s [about the journey](http://www.bravenewtraveler.com/2007/12/05/forget-the-destination-focus-on-the-journey/), then the method of transportation is important.

By boat, by train, by foot, by car…the manner in which we travel plays a large role in the way in which we experience the world.

**8.** [***Proud Mary***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ROalKnVZfU) **by CCR**

Is it possible to listen to this song and not want to give up that “good job in the city” to “hitch a ride on a river boat queen”? Whether it’s on the Mississippi, the Amazon, the Nile, the Ganges, or some smaller, quieter river, boats are a great throwback way to travel.

**9.** [***City of New Orleans***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfxoM6trtZE) **by Arlo Guthrie**

I’m not sure you can call yourself a traveler if you’ve never made at least [one trip by train](http://www.bravenewtraveler.com/2008/02/14/man-in-seat-61-interview-green-travel/), passing time playing cards with friends and watching the world pass outside your window.

**Songs about the reasons we travel**

We each have our private reasons for taking a trip, but there are common themes that link travelers.

Often we journey in [search of something](http://www.bravenewtraveler.com/2008/04/17/10-things-to-learn-about-yourself-when-traveling-alone/)–ourselves, love, adventure, understanding, the place we belong. Sometimes we go simply because we can’t stand to stay where we are or because of an almost desperate urge for movement.

And in some cases, there is no reason. We travel simply because we are travelers.



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**10.** [***Time to move on***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rCYcU23cjw) **by Tom Petty**

Stay in one place too long and sometimes it really seems that you can feel the grass growing underfoot. That’s when you know for certain that it’s time to move on.

**11.** [***The world at large***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OC-syVfvOMs) **by Modest Mouse**

With the changing of seasons comes a desire for a change of scenery. The migrating instinct awakes in our souls.

**12.** [***America***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCbOEZ8c8dM) **by Simon & Garfunkel**

While every trip might be a search for somewhere new or different, it’s also true that every journey away from home is an opportunity to better understand the place from which we come.

**13.** [***Taking the long way around***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1SS0qCo5h4) **by the Dixie Chicks**

You have them – the friends who stayed at home and settled down. You look at their lives and can’t imagine finding happiness that way. They, on the other hand, look at your life and wonder why you always have to take “the long way around.” Different strokes, right?

**14.** [***The river***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSIKSfqgjwM) **by Garth Brooks**

Some people are content to sit on the shorelines, but those of us who travel know that we’ve got to get out there and chance the rapids, dance in the tides, and follow the dream wherever it leads.

**15.** [***Fly away from here***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gf107A_JOc) **by Aerosmith**

As Steven Tyler sings, “our hopes and dreams are out there somewhere.” We can stay where we are and hope our dreams come to us or we can go out and find that better place. I’m not seeing much of a choice here.

**16.**[***Free bird***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mioGewkWVdo) **by Lynrd Skynrd**

If you live for that feeling of freedom that comes with arriving in a destination where no one knows you, there’s nothing in the world that can hold you down.

**17.** [***Ramble on***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLkOE4XDBis) **by Led Zeppelin**

Is it love that we’re all looking for as we ramble on? Maybe… though not necessarily romantic love. Love of a place, love of a time, love of life itself.

**18.** [***Here I go again***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKTiwCez6Zs) **by Whitesnake**

Sometimes the road is lonely and the destination isn’t always clear, but the dream is always big enough to compel us to walk down that road time and time again.

**19.** [***Ramblin’ man***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WGVW7byRCA) **by the Allman Brothers**

Trying to explain why you travel to those who’d rather stay in one place is often futile. You’re coming from places too far apart, so sometimes the best answer (and maybe the true answer) is simply that you were “born a ramblin’ man.”

**Songs that capture the joy of travel**

At the end of the day, what most often inspires us to go is the ecstasy of travel, pure and simple. The frustrations of airports, the struggles with packing, and the tedium of days spent working all fade away when you set off on your journey.



Photo by [Ash](http://www.everystockphoto.com/photo.php?imageId=1227286)

**20.**[***Changes in latitude, changes in attitude***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzUhzRgk9xk) **by Jimmy Buffett**

Who hasn’t scanned the departures at the airport and recalled all the places that they’ve already been and made plans for the places still to be explored?

**21.** [***On the road again***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kz_mwWjoGdE) **by Willie Nelson**

Going places that you’ve never been, seeing things that you’ve never seen, making music with your friends…isn’t that what travel is all about?

**22.** [***A good day to run***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be8-cIVd9CM) **by Darryl Worley**

The only question this song leaves to ponder is: what day isn’t a good day to run?

**23.** [***Roam***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWEfmCvu8R8) **by the B-52’s**

Fly the skies, see the seas, run around all the continents. Go ahead, roam without a care.

**24.** [***Come away with me***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBKcKQHZXks) **by Norah Jones**

I’m not sure it’s possible to resist this siren’s call to walk with her in yellow-grassed fields, to stand with her atop a mountain, to lie with her under a tin roof in the rain. It’s travel the romantic way.

**25.** [***Fly away***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAeYTC_uY54) **by Lenny Kravitz**

Just think of all the places you would visit if you could fly, taking off with every whim. And travel without the hassle of the airport…I’m not sure it gets better than that.

**26.** [***Life is a highway***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCPbL4yA7ik) **by Tom Cochrane**

Windows down, gas tank full, an open road in front of you. This song demands that you sing along as you see the world from behind the wheel.

**27.** [***Wherever I may roam***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_8bixXnEDY) **by Metallica**

When you’re able to find home on the road, you know that you’ve reached a new level of travel and you no longer care how the world defines you.

**28.** [***I’ve been everywhere***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eI4BumtpfA) **by Johnny Cash**

Though I’ve yet to actually meet anyone who can claim they’ve been everywhere, there certainly are a lot of people trying. Regardless of whether you like to hit as many spots as you can or take it slow and easy through one place, rambling through the many places listed in this song is always fun.

**29.** [***King of the road***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARj-sWYQs4Y) **by Roger Miller**

Everybody wants to be king of something, and if you’re a traveler, there’s no better kingdom than the road.

**30.** [***Around the world***](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kH6JXV7vOLM) **by the Red Hot Chili Peppers**

No arguing here. Life is indeed beautiful all around the world.